

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

My father wanted me to be a top footballer: Azizul Hakim

“My love for football began in school,” he recalled. “I played regularly and took part in annual sports competitions. One of my teachers, Kawsar Sir, encouraged me greatly. We also competed in inter-school tournaments, and that is where my passion for the game truly developed.”

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Long before he became one of Bangladesh's most beloved actors, Azizul Hakim dreamt of making his name on the football pitch.

Best known for his memorable performances in television dramas during the 1990s, Hakim remains a familiar and cherished face to audiences across the country. Having begun his artistic journey with the theatre troupe Aranyak before moving into television, film, and eventually directing, few may know that he once enjoyed a promising football career in Dhaka's First Division League.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the veteran actor reflected on a chapter of his life that might have led him down a very different path.

“My love for football began in school,” he recalled. “I played regularly and took part in annual sports competitions. One of my teachers, Kawsar Sir, encouraged me greatly. We also competed in inter-school tournaments, and that is where my passion for the game truly developed.”

Football was more than just a hobby in the Hakim household. His father was one of his biggest supporters and dreamt of seeing his son become a professional footballer.

“My father encouraged me in every possible way,” he said. “He bought all the equipment I needed and always believed I could become a top footballer. Football was his favourite sport as well, so perhaps I inherited that passion from him.”

After completing school, Hakim enrolled at Titumir College in Dhaka, where his commitment to football only intensified. He joined the college football team and regularly competed, nurturing ambitions that extended beyond the campus grounds.

Recalling his college days, he said that his classmate at Titumir College was actor

Rubel. Sathi and Gama also played in the same team with him. During his school days, Munna, Anwar, Chio and Swapan were part of their team.

During his college years, his father dreamed that one day his son would play for the national team. “One day, my father took me to Mofiz Ahmed, who was then the manager of Victoria Sporting Club. At that time, Abdur Rahim was the coach. Mofiz

chacha introduced me to the coach, and that is how he started playing for Victoria Sporting Club.”



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

The actor fondly remembers the era's vibrant football culture, when Dhaka Stadium would overflow with passionate supporters.

“The stadium used to be packed,” he recalled. “One side would be filled with Abahani supporters and the other with Mohammedan fans. I supported Abahani, but I loved watching good football regardless of the team.”

As a forward for Victoria Sporting Club, Hakim competed against some of the strongest teams in domestic football, including Wari, Rahmatganj, BGMC and Brothers Union. Between 1975 and 1977, he played several seasons in the First Division League, collecting memories that remain vivid decades later.

“I spent most of my playing days at Dhaka Stadium,” he said. “Those years gave me countless unforgettable experiences.”

Hakim also remembers the football icons who inspired an entire generation.

“Monju *bhai*, Nannu *bhai* and Salahuddin were among the biggest stars of Dhaka football at the time,” he said. “They were the players everyone looked up to.”

Although football eventually gave way to acting, the sport has remained close to his heart. Today, he sees echoes of his own childhood dreams in his son, who has also developed a passion for the game.

“My son plays football now and dreams of becoming a good footballer,” Hakim said. “I encourage him just as my father encouraged me. Perhaps he inherited that love for football in the same way I inherited it from my father. Watching him play brings me great joy.”

For Azizul Hakim, football may not have become a lifelong profession, but the lessons, memories and dreams forged on the pitch continue to shape the person he is today.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?



‘July Chronicles’

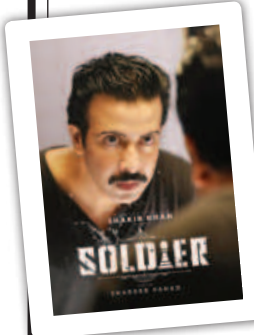
Part of the *Ganabhyutthaner Itihash* Initiative, *July Chronicles* explores how the experiences, memories and testimonies of the July 2024 mass uprising can be documented and preserved. Bringing together writers, researchers and participants, the workshop focuses on transforming personal narratives and historical evidence into enduring records of a pivotal moment.

DATE: FRIDAY | JUNE 19, 2026

TIME: 3:00 PM – 6:30 PM

VENUE: ABDUL KARIM SAHITYABISHARAD HALL, BANGLA ACADEMY

‘Soldier’ team heads to Bangkok for final shoot



Fans were excited when Shakib Khan revealed at the special screening of *Rockstar* that they would not have to wait until next Eid to watch his upcoming film *Soldier* in theatres.

Directed by Shakeeb Fahad, the patriotic film began shooting in October last year. While recent rumours suggest it may be released during Durga Puja in October instead of December, the director has said that no release date has been finalised.

Speaking to local media, Shakeeb Fahad said the team will travel to Bangkok, Thailand, later this month to shoot the remaining portions of the film.

He added that his current priority is completing the project, while the production house will decide on the release date. According to the director, both October and December remain possible release windows, with a final decision to be made after filming wraps up.

NEWS

Vitamin A+ campaign to resume

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those for children aged one year to under five years are expected to reach the country on June 19.

The government procured the capsules through Unicef after three attempts to procure them through open tender failed, he said, adding that the next campaign will be held in four to six months.

The campaign aims to improve children's immunity and nutritional status, and lapses are likely to increase malnutrition and weaken immunity, making measles more severe, said health experts.

Although the campaign was scheduled twice a year, the last National Vitamin A plus campaign held in March last year, said officials.

They attributed the suspension to the expiry of the sectoral programme that funded the campaign, the lack of alternative funding during the interim government's tenure, and

complications in procuring the capsules through the tender process.

The country is experiencing the worst measles outbreak in recent memory, with 656 deaths, most of them children, and over 97,000 reported cases of measles or measles-like illness since March 15.

The campaign was funded under National Nutrition Services (NNS), a component of the 4th Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP).

Although the tenure of the 4th HPNSP ended in June 2024, there were enough capsules in stock to carry out the March 2025 campaign. The interim government scrapped the proposed fifth programme in March 2025, creating a funding gap, said officials.

After the expiry of the sector programme, the Institute of Public Health Nutrition (IPHN) was tasked with carrying out the Vitamin A plus

campaign.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Eunus said the campaign could not be held initially due to a funding crisis.

Even after funds were arranged, complications arose in the tender process for procuring the capsules, leading to the cancellation of tenders on three occasions.

The new government later decided to buy the capsules through Unicef, Eunus said.

He added that 2,838,794 children aged six to 11 months will receive one type of Vitamin A plus capsule, while 23,514,972 children aged one year to under five years will get another type.

The capsules will be distributed through 120,000 centres across the country, he said, adding that around 500 mobile centres will be set up at bus and train stations and launch terminals to provide capsules to travelling children.

A Shariatpur village shaped

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Shariatpur had long struggled with economic insecurity. Major floods in 1988, 1998 and 2004 destroyed crops and displaced thousands, said Mahbub Alam, a local journalist.

“Most of these people were involved in agriculture or worked as labourers. Many of them went to Italy in search of stability and security. And their lives changed.”

Mohammad Ali, a 58-year-old businessman, is one of those early migrants.

With the help of his maternal uncle, he moved to Italy in 1985, studied there, and later set up a restaurant. Back then, many migrants travelled to the European country through irregular routes. Yet, the opportunities they found there quickly changed the fortunes of families back home.

His uncle, Matiur Rahman Bhulu, had earlier migrated to Italy, along with a small group of people from Naria, in the early 1980s.

In 1987, Italy regularised hundreds of undocumented Bangladeshis, opening a path to stability and long-term residency for them. In the 1990s, Italy began recruiting foreign workers through sponsors, which was a boon to people in Naria, said Ali.

Bangladeshis already settled in Italy started helping their relatives and neighbours migrate by arranging jobs and documents for visas, said

Ali, who runs various businesses, including an engineering firm, in Bangladesh and Italy.

Over time, Italy became woven into the identity of the village. Remittances reshaped the local economy. Many families bought plots of land, and mud houses were converted into concrete buildings. Some migrants built multiple homes in Shariatpur and Dhaka.

“Those who had moved to Italy earlier earned much more than migrants do now,” Faraz said, adding that many Bangladeshis are involved in businesses, particularly in the hospitality sector, in Rome, Milan and Venice and other cities.

“In Italy, Bangladeshis are widely known for their hard work and low levels of involvement in crime,” he said. As success stories spread, migration became more than an economic choice – it became a symbol of dignity and social status.

Children grew up listening to stories about Europe. Young people saw their neighbours, dressed in fashionable clothes, return from Italy during holidays, carrying expensive goods.

For many here, the dream of a better life in Italy seems almost inevitable.

Sadhin Sarder, a student of Class-V, is growing up with such a dream.

“My father went to Italy through Libya 10 years ago. He works as a chef there. I dream of going to Italy one day,” he said.

Noting that many of his classmates

have similar ambitions, he said, “Only a few students in my school want to become doctors, engineers or teachers. Most of them want to go abroad.”

Faraz believes the culture of migration has significantly undermined students' motivation to pursue education.

“Many boys don't focus on their studies. They think if they can make it to Italy, they do not need much education. They'll learn Italian and some skills. That's it.”

But it has become more difficult to migrate to Italy. Over the past few years, legal migration costs soared and the demand for visas outpaced the labour market needs in Italy. Many fortune seekers now seek cheaper but far riskier alternatives – perilous journeys through Libya and the Mediterranean Sea.

Migrants travelling through Libya often fall prey to human traffickers and armed groups. Many are detained in camps known as “game ghar”, where migrants are tortured for ransoms.

Ali said migrants taking the Libya route are not only risking their lives but also damaging Bangladesh's image abroad.

“Italy does not need so many people. Job opportunities for Bangladeshi workers are now limited.”

“The Libya route is extremely dangerous. There are frequent reports of people drowning in the sea. Nobody should take this route to go to Italy,” he added.

Soil from river dredging threatens

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Construction Brigade under the supervision of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB). Following the signing of an MoU between BWDB and the army in September 2025, work on the project began the following month.

While the project's objectives were widely welcomed, residents say poor planning and inadequate oversight have turned it into a source of fear and uncertainty for some of the region's most vulnerable people.

Visiting the shelter project yesterday, this correspondent saw children, including Urmil's son, trying to clear mud from behind their house. Inside, it seemed the family was living amid an ongoing disaster.

The shelter project in Baratia village, comprising 48 houses, was established in 2021 under former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Ashrayan-2 project. It was initiated to provide housing for landless and displaced families who had lost everything to river erosion, poverty and repeated displacement.

Residents allege that soil excavated during the ongoing dredging of the Bhadra River is being dumped dangerously close to the houses. In several places, the piles have reached nearly roof height, raising fears of collapse during heavy rainfall.

According to locals, one house has already been demolished to facilitate the movement of excavators. Of the 29 houses along the riverbank, at least eight have suffered significant damage, while almost all have had their kitchens, toilets or access paths affected by the dumped soil.

Abdul Hamid Sheikh, who lives in one of the riverbank houses with his eight-member family, showed large cracks running through the walls.

Pointing to the cracks, he said, “These houses were already fragile. How can they survive when massive piles of soil are dumped beside them using heavy machinery? The walls can collapse at any time.”

Sheets of corrugated tin on the house were partially buried under soil.

“The roof has bent under pressure. Half the house is blocked. Nobody comes to see our suffering. We heard the UNO visited, but she did not inspect the damaged houses,” he alleged.

Residents also said one of their limited drinking water sources had been buried under the dredged soil.

“There is one tube well for every 12 families. Even that has not been spared,” Hamid said.

Sharmin Akter, a day labourer who has lived in the project for five years after moving from Sathkira's

Shyamnagar, said, “They started dumping soil without consulting or even informing us. We are afraid to speak out. We only want the soil removed before something tragic happens.”

Officials, however, say corrective measures are being taken.

Dumuria Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sabita Sarker said the matter had come to her attention and that she had already spoken with BWDB officials.

“The issue is being resolved,” she added.

Contacted, Khulna Deputy Commissioner Hoore Jannat told The Daily Star, “We have spoken to the officer in charge of the army's work on this issue. They are taking the initiative to remove the soil from the houses.”

During a visit to the site on Sunday, Polash Kumar Banerjee, executive engineer of Jashore BWDB, said the implementing agency had been instructed to remove the soil from around the houses by yesterday afternoon.

“If any houses or structures have been damaged because of the soil dumping, those will also have to be repaired by the responsible authority.”

However, during another visit to the site yesterday, this correspondent found the soil removal work progressing slowly, with soil cleared from only a few of the shelter houses.

5-yr-old girl's body found in Mymensingh

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persons in the afternoon, he added. “We suspect the child was raped before being murdered, and her body was later left on the riverbank.”

In Noakhali's Chatkhil upazila, a case was filed with Chatkhil Police Station over the rape of a 10-year-old boy after he was allegedly lured into plucking coconuts.

OC Abdul Monnaf said the child's father filed the case against Saiful Islam, alias Mona, 40, who allegedly took the child to a building rooftop around 11:00am and raped him at gunpoint.

The boy reportedly suffered severe bleeding, while the accused fled immediately after the incident.

“Three people were detained for questioning in connection with the incident and are currently in custody,” the OC told The Daily Star during the filing of this report around

7:00pm.

However, the identities of the detainees were not disclosed for the sake of the investigation.

“Police operations are underway to arrest the accused,” he added.

Meanwhile, in Jashore, police yesterday arrested three youths over the alleged gang rape of a woman in Sharsha upazila.

The arrestees – Hasib Al Hasan, 19, Abdur Rahman Imon, 20, and Mehedi Hasan Tutul, 21 – are residents of different villages in the upazila, police said.

According to the victim's family and police, the incident took place on the night of June 13 when the woman was outside her house and a group of armed men allegedly took her to a secluded area, raped her, and threatened to kill her if she disclosed the incident, said Sharsha Police Station OC Maruf Hossain.

The victim later informed her family and filed a case against five people, after which police arrested three of the accused. They were produced before a court in the afternoon and subsequently sent to jail.

“Efforts are underway to arrest two other suspects,” the OC said.

In Pirojpur, students of Karimunnessa Girls' High School brought out a procession demanding punishment for a teacher of Pirojpur Town High School, who allegedly attempted to rape a Class 10 student during private tuition lessons.

The protesters alleged that teacher Nirmal Chandra Bhadra, on the pretext of giving her “extra notes” for exams, tried to rape the student on May 22.

(Our correspondents from Pirojpur, Mymensingh, Noakhali and Benapole contributed to the report.)